



# AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO

**John Gage**  
National President

**J. David Cox, Sr.**  
National Secretary-Treasurer

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National Vice President for  
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May 5, 2009

Dear Chairman Towns:

On behalf of the over 600,000 federal workers represented by the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE), I strongly urge you to support H.R. 626, the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act of 2009, introduced by Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY). H.R. 626, which has bipartisan support, provides four weeks of paid leave for federal workers who are the parents of newborns and newly adopted children. This landmark legislation is an investment in both the federal workforce and their families.

Virtually all research on child development and family stability supports the notion that parent-infant bonding during the earliest months of life is crucial. Newborns and adopted children who form strong emotional bonds or "attachment" with their parents are most likely to do well in school, have positive relationships with others and enjoy good health during their lifetimes. These are national outcomes that should be the goal for all children, including those of federal employees. A parent should not be forced back to work immediately after the birth or adoption of a child because she or he could not do without his or her paycheck.

Those who oppose the bill cite "fiscal responsibility" as a reason to delay or deny action on H.R. 626 opposed these same provisions long before the recent economic downturn. Hard economic times are exactly the right time for the government to take responsible action on behalf of families. A recent Financial Times article stated that in this most recent recession, men account for almost 80% of job losses. A responsible worker benefit like federal employee paid parental leave provides a certain source of income that allows families to bond and households during economically troubled times.

A lack of paid parental leave negatively impacts the government when a good worker, trained at taxpayer expense, decides to leave federal service for another employer who does offer paid leave. Although federal workers do accumulate leave, by conservative estimates it would take a federal worker who uses two weeks of annual leave and only three days of sick leave per year close to five years to accrue enough sick and annual leave to receive pay during the 12 weeks of parental leave allowed under FMLA. Younger workers of child bearing years are at a moment in their careers when they can least afford to take any time off without pay and least likely to have accumulated significant savings.

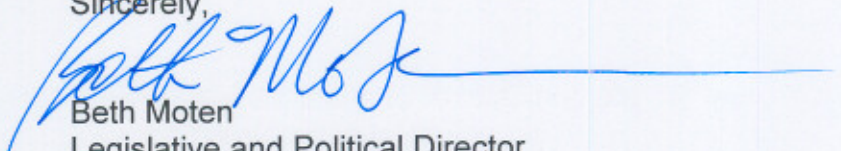




These so-called alternatives to a benefit of paid parental leave to federal workers are unrealistic and fail to adequately address the problems families face.

The time has come for the federal government to set the standard for U.S. employers on paid parental leave. Although there is no current law providing paid parental leave for federal workers, the federal government currently reimburses federal contractors and grantees for the cost of providing paid parental leave to their workers. Surely if such practice is affordable and reasonable for contractors and grantees, federal employees should be eligible for similar treatment. The benefits to children and families of four weeks of paid parental leave are enormous and long-lasting. AFGE strongly urges you to support the Federal Employee Paid Parental Leave Act of 2009.

Sincerely,



Beth Moten  
Legislative and Political Director